Theories and principles for planning and enabling learning

The aim of this essay is to identify and discuss the significance of relevant theories and principles of learning and communication. I will analyse the impact of two theories (Behaviourist and Cognitive) of learning I used in my lesson plan for delivery. Also, I write about the impact these two approaches have in my professional development.

I work as an ICT teacher at an accredited centre for OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA) examination board, City and Guilds and eDCC (eDigital competence Certificate). At NOVA functional skills are taught to help adults to integrate into society and to build their confidence. The organisation supports its users to move on into paid or voluntary work of further education or training. The Government??™s Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency states that ???...Functional skills are practical skills in English, information and communication technology (ICT) and mathematics. They allow individuals to work confidently, effectively and independently in life.

??™ :(http://www. qcda. gov.

uk 2010) A learning theory is an attempt to describe how students learn, and obviously help us to understand the complex process of learning. Essentially, as a teacher, we need to know these theories and principles, to be able to plan and deliver a good lesson. Therefore, having that knowledge we will able to meet our students??™ needs and help them to achieve their goals. Maslow??™s hierarchy of basic needs (1962) is one of the most powerful theories about motivation which makes me understand that without

motivation it is likely my student will drop out the course or learning will not take place in the appropriated manner. Reece et al (2007, pg87) said ???..

. Maslow states that needs must be satisfied before effective learning can take place. If a student is tired, cold and hungry then the quality of learning will be reduced…??™ it is important to establish an environment which is purposeful and where students??™ will feel secure, included and valued. Meeting these needs their motivation will always be higher and we can support Maslow statement.

However, ???…Maslow seems to imply, that only well off people in caring relationships and successful in their lives can achieve their full creative potential ..

.??™ Armitage, et al (2007, pg66). This may not always be the case as I have witnessed students??™ from unsteady backgrounds be extremely motivated and achieve very highly within the ICT course in which I am qualified. Often they have little or no ownership within their living situation and so they take ownership of their learning. Gravells et al.

(2008, pg 72) states that ???…Empathy and sympathy are also skills of communication. You can express empathy when you have personally experienced something your student has gone through??™. As an adult and a mature student myself, I do understand the anxiety my students feel when they start a new curriculum and among new people. Therefore, my tendency is always to approach my students with empathy and respect trying to make them to feel positive about themselves, their future and comfortable in the

new environment. There are five main categories or philosophical frameworks in which learning theories fall.

As Reece et al.(2007 pg81) make clear, ??™The five main areas are Behaviourism, Neo-behaviourism, Gestalt (Insight), Cognitive Development and Humanist, as well as more recently theorised areas of lifelong learning or ??? third age??™ learning, which feature principles of gerontology??™. The theories I tend to used in my daily practice are Behaviourist, Cognitive and Humanist as there are the ones according to my subject feet perfectly with the my lesson plans. The first approach, use in my daily lesson plan, (appendix 1/yellow) is from a behaviourist point of view. Behaviourism is a theory of learning based upon the idea that all behaviours are acquired through conditioning. Armitage et al. (2007, pg 72) suggest.

.. ??? In a behaviourists approach, learning should progress step-by-step and build on previously learned material.??™ In my subject specially, the constant repetition and step by step is necessary as my student need to memorise how to use part of the computer as well as step by step the use of the software. By using this approach, my students need to use their memory constantly; otherwise, they would not be able to move on to the next step. I always advice note taking as they can go back to it and continue with their task.

…. Armitage, et al, (2007, pg72) states ??? an observable change in behaviour??™ and only what can be measured can be regarded as learning.??™ Observing my students achieving their tasks, I can support that

learning has been taking place as new exercises are given and different explanation taking place.

Lack of confidence, are major concerns of many non-ICT users, therefore, the use of Behaviourist approach can become at times very stressful. Reason why, I tend to mix able with low able students to make the atmosphere friendly and the learning and teaching process less stressful and enjoyable. The second approach, used in my daily lesson plan, (appendix 1/green) is from a cognitive/constructivist point of view. ??? It is a cognitive process which involves acquiring new information which enables the student to evolve and transform their existing knowledge… and apply the new state of knowledge to new situations.??™ According to my students??™ ICT level of knowledge, I have prepared this lesson plan, where the main topic is mathematics; embedded in ICT, Excel ??" Software.

In this particular course, the level of knowledge of my students in Excel is low, therefore, the importance of encourage them to recall information from primary school in mathematics, is essential. For example, asking my student to remember the way they used to sort decimals number to the right, when adding up, allow them to understand, why, when data is inserted in a spreadsheet it goes straight to the right side of the column. This recalled information is retrieve by my students and used as a basic support to understand they can fit this previous information with the new one and work successfully. This kind of situation, does not happen just with this level of knowledge in ICT, as like any other mature student, we have previous experiences that need to be recall when needed, to be able to work properly in any task, so, we can understand and improve practice to achieve goals.

Susan Wallace (2007. Pg100) states, ??? the teacher??™s attitude should be non-judgemental and accepting; and the student should be made to feel valued and care for??™. This quotation may do not work for everyone but, there are limitations like for example, some students have slow memory, or difficulty in concentration due perhaps to previous alcoholism, drugs abuse or long term unemployed; so, with this student I have to approach them in different way as they need a more humanist approach and time for information to be retrieve and transformed in new task.

???...

. In the early stages the student should be regularly rewarded when correct responses are given. This feedback stimulates motivation to continue??™. Armitage et al. (2007, pg 72) , working with some adults, who occasionally cannot see the relevance of technology to themselves, or, their lack of confidence, on their ability to learn about technology is low, or, basically they cannot identify the benefits of technology, the importance of frequently feedback is higher to be able to keep them motivated. I observed how their behaviour change after a verbal positive feedback is provided, as their motivation growth and they want to work on task and share ideas with others while working on their own or in group. Also, the body language and communication shows they are feeling good about themselves and positive about their learning and future in the course, which is what my intentions are by providing constantly positive verbal feedbacks. Reece et al, (2007, pg77) states that ???.

.. Help Students feel good about themselves and they may learn that much more effectively.

..??™ ??? Discovery learning involves confronting the student with a problem an allowing them to explore the problem and try out solutions on the basis of enquire and previous learning under the guidance of a teacher??™. Armitage et al.

(2007, pg74, 75) By encouraging my student to ??? play??™ and ??? explore??™ with the hardware and software, gives them the freedom of understand how technology works and how they can sort problems out while I am supervising their work. ??? Transaction Analysis (TA) a human interaction theory developed by Eric Berne (1964), states that everyone possesses three mental outlooks or egos states: Parent, Adult, and Child??™..

.. (Handouts – 27/01/2010), It is common to have students who are scare with the new technology, tools and people, therefore to these students I tend to approach them as a child, to be able to get through their own capacity of understand how new technology works. By approaching my student as a child our interaction is much better and they feel relax and eager to learn; some of them giggles but when I swap this stage to and adult stage they know we are serious learning. ??? A transaction is a basic unit of social interaction in which some verbal or non-verbal signal is offered, recognised and responded to.??™ (Handouts – 27/01/2010). Reece et al, (2007, pg58) states ?????¦Andragogy is all about how adults learn.

??™ This statement places my students at the centre of learning experience and I have to agree with it??¦. Knowles (1970) state that adults prefer to learn in a different way forms that of children Reece et al, (2007, pg58)??¦ as it is observed in my classroom. Some students like to work on their own by using their previous knowledge, while others prefer to work in groups so they can learn by observation from each other. A child needs constantly reinforcement as there is no experience to be recalled at that stage of life. Reece et al, (2007, pg57) states ???...

A pedagogical approach may be described as a teacher dominated learning situation??™. I do like to combine pedagogy and andragogy with students with a low level of ICT knowledge as well as students with learning disabilities, as often they don??™t have the ability to work alone, or without teacher support. These two approaches mixed together support in a big way these students as they often need a lot of direction and prompt to meet the objectives of the lesson.

Yvonne Hiller (2005, pg81) states that, ???...Kolb??™s cycle accounts for the way in which people can abstract generalizations from a concrete experience and devise ideas for future experimentation based on their reflections.

..??™ Using Kolb??™s cycle as a principle in my reflective practice , I have learnt that by using a feedback strategy, I can listen to my students about my delivery, and I can see where I can reinforce my teaching; and make improvements in the way I approach the lesson and students. I have learnt as well that by approaching my students in an Unconditional Positive Regard (UPR) they feel at ease with the new environment and the new knowledge

acquire, as they can see that I am there with them to help them and not to judge their learning. Reflecting as well, on my own previous learning experience, and mixing it with my new knowledge from theories; I have learn clearly what happening when learning process is taking place and how I can reinforce and use strategies in a positive way to support my students. In conclusion, and in my personal opinion any person who want to become a facilitator need to be aware of these approaches and more, to be able to meet students needs. Behaviorism and Cognitive approach work together so we the facilitator can provide appropriate help to our learners and learnt as well from them. Bibliography IndexAppendix 1: Lesson plan with Behaviorist and Constructivist approach BooksArmitage, A et al, (2007) Teaching and Training in Post-Compulsory Education.

Poland: OZGraf S. A. Handouts provided in class on the 27/01/2010 Reece I & Walker S, (2007) Teaching, training & learning Great Britain: SS Media LimitedHiller, Y (2005) Reflective teaching in further and adult education Great Britain: Ashford Colour PressWallace, S (2007) Teaching, Tutoring and Training in the Lifelong Learning Sector. Learning Matter LtdWebsites Qualification and Curriculum Development Agencyhttp://www. qcda. gov. uk Accessed 19/07/2010